

Clarification of Fire Management Categories and RMP-Level Decisions H-1601-1 - Land Use Planning Handbook (Appendix C.I.J.)

A. Category “A” Areas. Areas where fire is not desired at all.

General description: This category includes areas where mitigation and suppression is required to prevent direct threats to life or property. It also includes areas where fire never played a large role historically in the development and maintenance of the ecosystem, and some areas where fire return intervals were very long. Examples are very mesic sites, very xeric sites and riparian areas.

Fire Mitigation Considerations: Emphasis should be focused on those actions that will reduce unwanted ignitions and reduce losses from unwanted wildland fires. [Note: “Wildland Fire Mitigation” is defined as: Those fire prevention and education actions that reduce unwanted human-caused ignitions; and those fuels management activities that reduce undesirable impacts and loss to life, property and natural and cultural resources.]

Fire suppression considerations: Emphasis should be placed on prevention, detection, and rapid suppression response and techniques.

Fuel treatment considerations: Non-fire fuel treatments should be employed.

B. Category “B” Areas. Areas where unplanned wildfire is not desired because of current conditions.

General Description: These are ecosystems (including some urban-interface areas) where an unplanned ignition could have negative effects unless/until some form of mitigation takes place. Sagebrush ecosystems, for example, can fall into this category because of encroachment of cheatgrass or a prolonged lack of fire which leads to large monotypic stands of sagebrush that won’t burn as they historically would have.

Fire Mitigation Considerations: Emphasize prevention/mitigation programs that reduce unwanted fire ignitions and resource threats.

Fire suppression/use considerations: For unplanned wildfire, suppression is the objective of this category.

Fuel treatment considerations: Fire and non-fire fuels treatments are utilized to reduce the hazardous effects of unplanned wildfire. Restorative treatments may consist of multiple non-fire treatments before the use of fire will be considered.

C. Category “C” Areas. Areas where wildland fire is desired, but there are significant constraints that must be considered for its use.

General Description: Areas where significant ecological, social or political constraints must be considered. These constraints could include air quality, threatened and endangered species considerations (effect of fire on survival of species), or wildlife habitat considerations.

Fire Mitigation Considerations: Programs should reduce unwanted fire ignitions and resource threats.

Fire suppression/use considerations: Resource considerations could be described in terms of maximum burn acreage (e.g., no more than 10% of the polygon acreage can burn in a year to preserve sagegrouse habitat), in terms of time of year (e.g., spring only), or as desired burned acres per decade from all types of fire. Areas in this category would generally receive lower suppression priority in multiple wildfire situations than would areas in the A or B categories.

Fuel treatment considerations: Fire and non-fire fuels treatments may be utilized to ensure constraints are met or to reduce any hazardous effects of unplanned wildfire.

D. Category “D” Areas. Areas where wildland fire is desired, and there are few or no constraints for its use.

General Description: Areas where unplanned and planned wildfire fire may be used to achieve desired objectives such as to improve vegetation, wildlife habitat or watershed conditions.

Fire Mitigation Considerations: Implement programs that reduce unwanted human-caused ignitions, as needed.

Fire suppression/use considerations: These areas offer the greatest opportunity to take advantage of the full range of options available for managing wildfire under the appropriate management response. Resource use considerations similar to those described for Category C may be identified if needed to achieve resource objectives. Areas in this category would be the lowest suppression priority in a multiple fire situation.

Fuel treatment considerations: There is generally less need for fuel treatment in this category. If treatment is necessary however, both fire and non-fire treatments may be utilized.

E. Broad Treatment Levels. For the A-D categories identified above, the land use plan must identify the level of anticipated fire activities (e.g. type/level of fuel treatment and amount of prescribed fire) or the associated NEPA analysis must assume an anticipated level of fire activity (reasonable foreseeable development levels).

F. General Restrictions. For the A-D categories identified above, the land use plan should identify any constraints or resource considerations related to fire suppression or fire management activities (e.g., restrictions on the use of dozers or retardant; targets for fire size or percentage of area burned over certain time-periods; etc.).